

## [opensuse] Re: Suse 10.3 install – oh dear (rant only)

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- *From:* Jim Henderson <[hendersj@xxxxxxxx](mailto:hendersj@xxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Sat, 24 May 2008 01:15:39 +0000 (UTC)
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On Fri, 23 May 2008 01:52:58 -0400, Edmund Fitzgerald wrote:

Jim Henderson wrote:

Let me be absolutely clear about one thing: My role inside Novell has nothing to do with the Linux product lines. I'm the manager of the instructor programs.

Ok... Thanks for making that clear.

No problem.

And I have to say, I'm damned impressed with Beta3. If it hadn't been for the factory kernel that breaks when ACPI is enabled on my laptop, I'd have said it was already an outstanding release.

Ouch!

Yeah, but a quick search on the error message (the INT 14 problem) told me that a more up-to-date kernel was in the factory, and that's working great.

I haven't tried it on a laptop yet.

Handy thing for me here is that I've got two T42p laptops – one with 10.3, and one with 11.0 Beta3 + some factory updates on it. Nice to have a point of comparison. The only difference between the two machines is that the one running 11.0 Beta3 is a little slower (1.7 GHz instead of 2.0 GHz).

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This is very easy for me to do, [...]

Thanks for clarifying that.

Again, no problem...

I think you have it reversed.

The "swearing at the developers" seems to have come about because the devs were ignoring the concerns of the users and replying to them with brush-off statements. Basically, rudeness was responded to with rudeness.

There's no rule that says that you have to reply to what you perceive as rudeness with more rudeness. Clearly that doesn't help and isn't getting people the answers they want. One definition of insanity that I've heard recently is "continuing to do the same thing and expect a different result".

I've had pretty good response from the developers here when I've asked questions. I make a point of sticking to the facts of my question, and when I share an opinion, I make an effort to do so in an unemotional way.

Maybe there's something to that.

And then when they banned Sam from a list [...]

Well, I don't know anything about that, so I'm hardly in a position to comment or judge. Even so, the one thing I'd say is that the devs are the hosts here; if they came into your home and acted rude and called you names, you'd be justified in throwing them out – and I'd be very surprised if anyone here didn't throw someone out who was being rude. It's really no different here.

There's nothing wrong with behaving in a professional and respectful way, even in the face of perceived rudeness or slights. Aren't we supposed to be working together here?

Like many others here, I've participated in online discussion areas of one kind or another for many, many years. It's very easy to interpret something in writing as being "angry" or "upset" or "rude" when it wasn't meant that way. Why not try giving people the benefit of the doubt instead of lashing out in response to something you think is rudeness? With all the different cultures and opinions, there are bound to be disagreements and misunderstandings. Those can be dealt with without

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escalation of hostilities.

For all I know, technologically, the 11.0 release will be very good -- but the answers coming from the team come off as anywhere from blase' disinterest for the concerns of those raising them to barely concealed contempt and hostility for even asking questions.

I would say this: Don't try to interpret what people \*feel\* or their emotional state from a written response. It doesn't translate well to writing, especially if the people doing the writing don't natively speak the language (I have had interactions with some of the internal SUSE folks over the last few years, and knowing that some don't speak English natively has helped me understand when they come across as forceful that they really don't mean to do that – it's just how they translate from German to English. German is a very direct (some would say blunt) language). Again, there's no reason to respond to perceived hostility with \*more\* hostility. Just grab the facts presented and comment on those.

Perhaps this is a difference in the U.S. vs European culture, [...] it seems to escape the SUSE people that many of those who have been prodding them for better answers have actually been in the Unix and/or IT field longer than the SUSE people themselves. Some of us still have nostalgic memories of PDP-11's running version 7 Unix and/or 2.x BSD (even though these same machines were thoroughly thrashing with as few as 10 users).

It's also important to bear in mind that when it comes to building a release, there are all kind of other factors (in addition to the technical factors) that figure into the decision making process. Resource management, schedule timelines – general project management. While I'm sure \*everyone\* wants a technically perfect release, there are other factors that come into play that affect the outcome.

That doesn't mean the input isn't valuable – as I said somewhere else here, \*listening\* to input doesn't mean taking every suggestion and implementing it – that's just not feasible. Listening means evaluating feedback against criteria and determining the impact of the change on other parts of the system and (a) whether or not it's something that would be a benefit to a larger part of the customer base, and (b) whether any given proposed change will require a delay in release – and whether such a delay is acceptable or not.

Sometimes the best product enhancement suggestions can't be implemented simply due to resource constraints. That's the reality of a development schedule.

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Anyways, about the KDE 3 vs KDE 4 discussion, I think it's a valid concern coming from those who deal with people who are completely new to Linux, and oftentimes suggest it to people who are willing to try something new -- that the KDE 3/KDE 4 issue be handled properly--not only for the sake of Novell and SUSE, but for the Linux community as a whole.

Sure, and I don't know that anyone disagrees with that. Where there are differing opinions are in whether what's been done is sufficient or not. As a general rule, people who are happy tend not to say anything, so it is important to take into consideration not only the feedback that comes in that's negative, but also to understand that in the context of the overall user base (which yes, does include the new user, not just the experienced user).

I spent a little time doing training material course development for eDirectory. Early on, the suggestion came in from a single large customer to modify the course development to cover trees with over a million objects in them. Labs were proposed and such, and we incorporated the changes. Turned out that most of the customers in the class thought that was interesting, but well beyond what they needed to know for their environments.

As a developer, you can't play the game that the loudest complainer gets their way all the time. You have to look at all the data and make a decision based on what's best overall.

In looking at the installer again when I installed beta3, I felt that the wording and arrangement of the choices on the page was appropriate. I didn't feel "pushed" into installing KDE4 – quite the contrary, the wording of "stable and mature" on the KDE3.5 item and the lack of that wording on the KDE4 item, plus the fact that the first item was GNOME and the last was KDE3.5 made me feel that I was being directed to select the first or last item rather than the middle item.

(I exclude the real last item in the last – "Other" – because that's an extra step to get into, and so again, psychologically speaking, most people aren't even willing to go into that to see what the other options are.)

When suggesting to a complete Linux neophyte that they try SUSE 11.0, do we really want to rely on the recollection of said neophyte to remember any caveats about KDE 4, when they probably didn't understand the verbal warning in the first place? (it's difficult to remember a message which you never understood to begin with). People don't want to suggest something to a friend, and then have it blow up in the friend's face, and have it harm their friendship or business connection.

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Absolutely. But at the same time, I don't know many Linux neophytes who will ask for an opinion and then go off and do the installation on their own. There are some, sure, but the vast majority are more likely to ask an experienced user to walk through the installation with them rather than try to remember what they've been told. That's been my experience – and in my team at Novell, I'm constantly helping the new Linux users (using SLED) with questions about how to do things. A few of them are likely able to install the product on their own, but if they were to decide to install it on their home machine, for example, they'd ask me if I could be available in case they had questions along the way.

The reason for that is that they know it's a change, and so they are assuming some risk as well in changing to Linux. Most people will want to mitigate that risk by having someone available to help out with the installation if they get stuck.

These sorts of effects seem to be completely ignored by the SUSE 11.0 folks,

"Seem to be" is the operative phrase here. Again, remember that this is a written medium, and you don't necessarily know that the feedback has been ignored. But in the end they do have a job to do – and that is to get the release ready to be put out there. Often times that may mean that they get the feedback, digest it, and incorporate it (or not) without writing a response on every suggestion made.

and yes, that seems to be making a lot of the list subscribers annoyed, because they get the feeling that the SUSE team is making a distro which is going to have a big "gotcha" in the install phase, and which will likely bite ANY new/neophyte user.

I can see how some might feel that way, sure. In the end, maybe we should grant a little more trust to the team that they are taking feedback into consideration and that they want the release to be a success. Nobody *\*wants\** to fail, but some of those who are getting annoyed seem to be of the opinion that the release team is looking forward to celebrating a huge failure. That's simply not the case (and I can say that without knowing anyone on the team – because nobody inherently *\*wants\** to fail).

I once heard the remark that there are no good physics text books, because a good physics text book would be written for students, whereas actual physics text books are written to impress other physics professors.

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Is it asking too much that the install screens for the 11.0 release be written appropriately so that it won't mislead new users?

Well, some people have the opinion that the install screens are misleading, and some have the opinion that they're not. In the end, we (on the list) could fuss over the specific wording for months and still not make everyone happy. Perhaps – and I'm just guessing here – the release team realised this early on in the discussion, took the feedback, incorporated what changes they felt were appropriate, but ultimately decided that it was a better use of their time to fix some of the technical glitches than to continue to spend time refining wording until everyone on this list was satisfied with it.

IOW, maybe they're trying to avoid "death by analysis" of this one little element of the product.

Again, just a guess on my part – not speaking for the team at all. I wouldn't dare.

That's ALL that the users have been asking for concerning this issue...for several \*months\* -- and rather than giving forthright answers, the SUSE people have been stonewalling and dismissive.

To tell you the truth, if these were face-to-face conversations. the whole thing would have gotten to the point of swearing in FAR less than the time it took on this list -- a couple of hours..or days, at most.

Then it is perhaps a good thing that the discussion wasn't a face-to-face conversation. Of course, the flip side of that is that if it had been f2f, maybe people would've been satisfied with the answers. It's easier to be angry at a screen full of words than an actual live, breathing human being. Online, nobody knows that you're really a dog. ;-)

I trust that the openSUSE team is taking all of the input into account and will make what they feel is the best decision. As users, we have two options once those decisions are made – live with it, or move. But a development team makes decisions based on \*facts\*, not \*emotions\* (or at least IMO they should), so people need to stop being so emotional over the appearance of KDE4 in the menu and just state the facts from their point of view. Calling people names is not only unhelpful, it's counterproductive.

Not if you look in the archives. This issue has been raised repeatedly over the last few months; and what's been bugging the users on this list is the lack of satisfactory answers, either of the dismissal "don't worry about it" type, or just purely outlandish fiction and claims to

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clairvoyance.

Well, like I said above, at some point a development team has to call an issue closed and move on to more important things. If they tried to make everyone 100% happy with every thing that people don't like, the product would never reach release.

Jim

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